

## THE EVENING WORLD'S COMPLETE NOVELETTE.

## DO YOUR STUFF

By William Slavens McNutt

ILLUSTRATED BY W. B. JOHNSTONE.

THE STORY OF A BASEBALL PITCHER WHO THOUGHT HE COULD ACT.

## WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY.

**SPEED GALLAGHER**, baseball pitcher extraordinary, signed up for a brief season in a vaudeville act.

**RED MARTIN**, the receiving end of the Gallagher battery and the balance wheel and safety valve of a friendly partnership.

**MARSHALL KENDRICK**, the "professional" factor in the vaudeville act.

**LOUISE CLARE**, on the stage from babyhood and never impressed by a man until she met Gallagher.

**SPEED GALLAGHER** won thirty-four games for the Gray Sox during the regular season. Then he pitched three straight shut-outs in the World Series. After that he was more popular than a neighbor with plenty of pre-war stuff, and as widely known as the President. So the K. and L. people signed him up for twenty weeks in vaudeville.

"What kind of stuff do I get to do?" Speed inquired after affixing his signature to the contract that called for more money a week than many college professors make in a year. The theatrical manager looked at him and sighed. "Let us worry about that, Speed," he suggested. "We'll frame up something for you."

The theatrical manager then called in Danny Pletcher, a clever young product of Broadway, who wrote plays in much the same way that a tailor makes suits. You showed Danny an actor or some one who wanted to be an actor, and said: "Something to fit this, Danny; we want to start rehearsals to-morrow night."

Danny would nod, measure his customer with a wise eye, and come on the following night with something approximating a passable fit.

"I've signed up Speed Gallagher," Danny nodded approval. "Good business; he ought to draw."

"He ought to," the theatrical manager agreed. "God knows, he won't be able to do nothing else. Fix us up something for him, Danny. About twenty minutes; to close in one act." "What can he do?" Danny asked. "Pitch," the manager said briefly. "I mean, has he got any stuff? Is he a hooper? Can he sing?"

"I don't know," the manager said without interest. "I suppose not. Better have a talk with him. I'll get Marshall Kendrick to carry him."

By that the manager meant that he would engage Marshall Kendrick, a well known comedian, to amuse the audience and keep them from realizing that they had been stung when they paid money to see Speed Gallagher do anything but play baseball. For this service the actor would receive about one-fifth the salary paid the pitcher.

**THE** act opened at Atlantic City. It was Speed, his catcher, Red Martin, and Marshall Kendrick.

"Just do your stuff, kid," Martin advised Speed reassuringly as they stood shivering in the wings just before the curtain went up. "Never mind this hoofer and singer; they're rung in on you. You just stall through that any old how, and then, when you come to burnin' 'em across to me, just do your stuff! That's all. Just do your stuff and we'll get by."

The act went with a whoop. Fortunately Speed's hooping and singing were so bad that the audience of admiring fans rocked in their chairs and laughed until the tears came at sight of their gangly, raw-boned favorite trying to make his feet and throat behave.

When, near the close of the act, they struck the set and Speed on the bare stage took a baseball in his big fist and began burning over curves and shoots to Red Martin, the roars of applause that answered his efforts had nothing of ridicule in them. While the audience clapped and shouted approval of his illustrations of how to pitch three straight shut-outs in the World Series, stumpy little bow-legged Martin, crouching low, thumped his big mitt and shouted his customary chant of encouragement.

"Do your stuff, kid! Atta boy! Do your stuff!"

When Speed reached his dressing room, after taking enough bows to suit a tenor, he was flushed with triumph. "I guess I didn't do so bad, huh?" he crowed to Red Martin.

"Well, your fast one wasn't breakin' so well," Martin demurred.

"I don't mean my pitchin'," Speed explained. "My other stuff."

"What other stuff?" Red snorted. "Why, you big, overgrown, goggle-eyed sap, you ain't got no other stuff. You don't think your hoofer and singer was any good, do you?"

"They seemed to like it," Speed grumbled. "They laughed when I done it."

that was his on the ball field.

She was a creature of the sham world; the world of canvas houses, paper flowers, fake fights, blank cartridges, brilliant sunshine and soft moonlight that came out of a machine. To her he was a citizen of the world of reality; a conqueror whose power was daily tried, tested and proved; a conqueror who fought and won with the harsh implements of reality.

**JACK REILLY**, the house manager in Chicago, introduced them after the show on the second night.

"I saw you in all of the games you pitched during the series last fall, Mr. Gallagher," she said. "You certainly did have them eating out of your hand."

"Aw, that was nothin' much," Gallagher mumbled. "Have you watched me act yet?"

She nodded. "I always come down in the wings when they strike the act and you start to pitch," she said.

"Oh, that!" Speed exclaimed. "That's nothin'. Have you seen the rest of it?"

She admitted that she had not.

"I'd like to have you watch it some night," Speed said. "I'd like to have you tell me what you think of it."

"I'll watch it at the matinee to-morrow."

"Wish you would. I've seen you on the stage lots of times. Gosh! You certainly can sing and dance."

She made a little grimace. "Oh, well, we've all got to do something for a living," she said lightly.

"Oh, sure!" said Speed, vaguely grinning. He shuffled his big feet and blushed. "I-I suppose there's a lot of guys askin' you to dinner after the show and such like as that, ain't there?"

"Oh—Johns!" she exclaimed scornfully. "Sure! They're always around. Lots of good it does them. Home and to bed for mine."

Gallagher nodded and gulped. "I don't suppose you'd go out with me," he said.

"Go out with you? Man, you didn't ask me to go out with you!"

"Didn't I?" he muttered. "I thought I did."

"No," she said. "You didn't."

Speed shuffled and wriggled. "Well, you wouldn't if I did, would you?"

"Sure I would if you did; but you haven't."

Speed grinned. "Well, will you?" he blurted.

"You bet I will," she agreed heartily. "Let's go."

**WITHIN** three weeks after starting west from Chicago, Gallagher proposed and was accepted. The engagement was brief and stormy. It had scarcely had time to begin, in fact, before Gallagher said:

"I'll cut out this baseball stuff for good now and we'll do an act together, eh? You and me?"

"Oh, but Speed, you mustn't give up baseball," she protested.

"Why not? Any roughneck can play baseball."

"But, Speed! That's your game!"

"Well, actin's my game, too, ain't it?" he said resentfully. "I'm gettin' more money for actin' than I ever got for playin' baseball. Will you

and me together?"

"But, Speed, you get paid so much for actin' simply because you're such a wonderful baseball player."

"Well, of course, I did at first," he admitted reluctantly. "Since I've learned the business like I have, it's different. I'm going pretty good, ain't I?"

"Why, yes," she agreed hesitatingly. "You're going all right, Speed, but—"

"But what?" he demanded truculently.

"Well, Speed, you're a baseball player; you're not an actor. Baseball is your stuff, just the same as actin' is mine. You've got to do your stuff."

"Maybe you think I ain't good enough to do an act with you," he

claimed. "You been holdin' something out on me all these years, kid. I always know you were a little bit fat from the wishbone up, but you never let me know before that you were the world's champion mucker! One of the nicest little girls in the world falls for you—a big farmer—and before you'd kissed her twice you started muckin' on living easy off her big reputation. You were goin' to quit work and go katin' around the country doin' nothing and draggin' down half of the big dough that she makes."

"Where do you get that stuff?" Speed muttered. "I guess my reputation's as big as hers, ain't it?"

Red confronted him, his feet spread

baseball—and this nice little dame that's foolish enough to fall for you, and your pals and the fans and everybody else—to go jump in the ocean, eh?"

"All right! You go ahead and jump. But I'm telling you this: You'll land right back where you started from, only when you get there you won't be a kid any more and there won't be any game to pick you out of the ash heap and make a king of you again. Instead of being a dirty faced little kid, you'll be a good for nothin' no account, hulkin' old tramp, moochin' quarters around pool rooms and tryin' to get nice clerks to listen to you while you tell 'em how good you was once. You an actor! Why, say, if you had one bad year in the big league—if your arm went back on you for one season—you couldn't get a contract at a dime an hour in a nickel club! That's the truth and you can take it or leave it!"

"Good God, Speed, what can we do? Nobody can get in there! That whole lower part's just a roaring hell. Man, we got to do something!"

Speed acted with a celerity that legitimized his name. With a side sweep of his arm he smashed the plate glass window of the hardware store, jumping quickly back to escape the falling fragments of glass. He kicked the jagged pieces left in the frame out of his way and stepped into the show window. From the hooks on which they were displayed he yanked down a ball of stout brown twine and a coil of quarter-inch Manila rope. With these he jumped back to the sidewalk. He raised his head and cupped his palms about his mouth.

"Louise! Don't jump!" he bellowed. "Don't jump!"

**A** GLASS transom over a wooden door next to the hardware store bore the inscription: "Rooms for Rent."

Speed spied the door. It was locked. He backed off several paces, hunched his right shoulder high against his head, and plunged into it. The door splintered and crashed inward. Followed by Red Martin, Speed dashed into the hallway and up the stairs. On the third floor he ran into a bewildered man throwing clothes into a trunk.

"The roof!" Speed shouted. "Which way to the roof?"

"It ain't on fire yet, is it?" The man chattered affrightedly. "This house ain't on fire yet? I got most of my things packed now, and if it ain't on fire yet I can—"

Speed grabbed him by the throat and slapped his face with his open palm.

"The roof!" he shouted again. "Which way to the roof? You gabbling idiot, tell me the way to the roof, or I'll tear your head off you."

The man gulped, pointed to a narrow doorway in the hall.

Speed tore through the opening, leaped up a narrow ladder-like flight of stairs, threw open the trap, and scrambled out on the flat roof.

He rushed to the edge of the roof and looked across. The little square window in the back wall of the theatre was almost on a level with him. Louise Clare was still standing there.

"Don't jump!" Speed bellowed at the top of his lungs. "Louise! Do you hear me? Here! Across the street on the roof! Don't jump!"

The girl in the tiny window high up above the growing flames heard and waved her answer to him.

Speed threw off his overcoat and took one of the baseballs from his pocket. He flipped out his jackknife, opened it and made two slashes in the tough, hornhide cover of the ball about an inch and a half long and a half inch apart. With a point of the knife blade he threaded an end of the stout twine, looted from the hardware store window, through the two slits and knotted it. Rapidly he uncoiled a considerable length of the twine so it would run free. With the ball in his hand, he rose and shouted to the girl.

"Get back!" he roared, motioning her. "Get back! One side! Look! The ball! See? Through the window; get back!"

**THE** girl understood and withdrew. The small square aperture was empty. Speed stood erect on the roof, hitched up his breeches in a manner familiar to him when he was in a tough spot on the diamond, twitched his cap, and wound up. He uncoiled with the snap of a released steel spring and, the ball with the brown twine tied to it flashed across and struck the brick wall an inch to the right of the opening.

Struck and fell to the street below! Speed Gallagher had missed. He had missed, and for the first time in his career panic seized him. He fell to trembling.

"Oh, my God! What's the matter with me?" he prayed. "Good God! Red, I can't make it." He was frantically hauling it on the string. "You try it, Red!" he begged. "My arm's gone, something's the matter with my arm! I can't do it; you try it!"

It was no job for Red Martin, and Red Martin knew it. He could peg to second with the next one, but to hit

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apart, his hands on his hips. "Say, you big blob of home-grown cheese, you listen to me. I want to tell you something. If it hadn't been for baseball, you wouldn't have had no more reputation than a second hand car. Your dad was a blacksmith down in a little hick burg in Tennessee that never had enough boots in it at one time to even get its name on the map. You were a bum, that's all. Just a bum! If you hadn't been such a nut about baseball, you might of worked hard, and some day got to be worth \$40 a month as a farm hand, but you were a nut about baseball and so you weren't worth even \$40 a month to nobody in that little neck of the woods. Oh, your dad told me all about you when he was visitin' you in Cincinnati last summer."

"You wouldn't go to school, and you wouldn't work. All you'd do was play baseball when you had anybody to play with, and when you didn't you'd go off and practice throwin' at a knot hole in the fence. They were just fixin' to send you to reform school when Barney Mercer happened to see you and give you a job pitching for that little integrity league of his in Mechnicstown. Now you're a star. You got a fancy car of your own and more money than you know how to count. And you got a reputation. Yeh! There ain't a man, woman or child in the United States who don't know who Speed Gallagher is. They follow you around in the streets and come and stare at you in the hotels. So many people know you that you can get the dough just for coming out on the stage and making a big fool of your self."

"And why do they know you? Because you were such an ornery little fellow when you were a kid that you wouldn't do nothin' but play baseball; because you grew up to be such a fat-headed sap that you've never been able to think of nothin' but baseball; because all the good sense that's spread here and there in most men is all bottled down to baseball sense in you. You know more about baseball than any man living and less about anything else. The name you put up out of nowhere, a hick, dirty faced, little country kid, and you're clean up on top of the heap. Now you're up there, you're going to tell

suggested sullenly.

"Well, Speed, you wouldn't think I was good enough to play baseball on your team, would you?"

The quarrel that followed was bitter and final. Speed sought relief from his mood in hard liquor, and Red Martin had his work cut out for him the next day to get the big pitcher sobered into shape for the matinee performance. After the show Red berated him in the dressing room.

"What the devil ails you?" he demanded. "This actin' thing gone to your head? In all the time I've been roomin' with you I never saw you drunk before!"

"Well, you seen me drunk last night, didn't you?"

"I sure did! And I'll tell the world you were one sloppy sight to see."

"Well, I can get drunk if I want to, can't I?"

"You proved that all right! You keep on like this and you're goin' to be in fine shape when you show up for spring training."

"Who said I was goin' to show up for spring training?"

Red stared. "You ain't had a row with the club, have you?"

"No, I ain't had no row with the club, but I'm off of baseball. I'm through!"

Red showed real concern. "What's wrong?"

"Aw, what's the use of tellin' you? Speed flamed. "You're like all the rest of 'em. You think all I can do is just play baseball. I'm goin' to show you guys, the whole bunch of you! I'm goin' to keep on actin', that's what I'm goin' to do; and I'll make more money at it than any of you birds, too. I'm goin' to show all of you guys, an' Louise Clare, too, that—"

"Louise Clare," Martin exclaimed. "What's she got to do with it?"

"Well, we had a fight," Speed admitted grudgingly.

Martin nodded. "I thought there was something. Come on, old boy, come clean. What's it all about?"



"AS SHE NEARED THE ROOF ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE, THE FLAMES LEAPED SUDDENLY HIGH ALONG THE BRICK WALL OF THE THEATRE."

"You're a darned liar," said Speed. "If I am," said Martin, his face suddenly white, "you ain't the man to tell me so and get away with it!"

It took five stage hands and the house manager to pry the two apart.

"I'm through!" Red panted as they dragged him away. "I'll work the week out, but after that you get somebody else to do it."

"You won't work no week out!" Gallagher roared. "You show up to-night and I'll knock your block off. And they ain't goin' to be nobody else either. I'll show you guys. That baseball part's out of this act. You hear me? Me and Kendrick is goin' to do straight string and dancin' from now on and you watch how we go. You just watch!"

**A** T TEN O'CLOCK that night Speed Gallagher left his dressing room on his way to his hotel. He was halfway down the first flight of stairs that led to the stage when he thought of the promise he had made to the manager of the hotel to autograph and give him three baseballs for his three hero-worshipping young sons.

He returned to his dressing room, took three baseballs from his trunk, dropped them into the side pocket of his overcoat and went his way.

As he stepped out the stage door he could hear Louise Clare singing a sprightly song. He passed Red Martin standing in the lobby. The two old friends did not speak.

Speed was heartless but stubborn. "I'll show 'em," he muttered to himself as he trudged along to his hotel. "Think I can do nothin' but play baseball, eh? I'll show 'em!"

**I** T WAS 10.30 when the clerk phoned up to Speed Gallagher's room. "The theatre's on fire, Mr. Gallagher," he said excitedly. "I thought you'd want to know. They say she's just blazing away."

Speed threw on his overcoat and rushed out. He was thinking of his trunk and clothes hanging in the dressing room.

The street was loud with the rumble and clang of fire apparatus; it

was a job for Red Martin, and Red Martin knew it. He could peg to second with the next one, but to hit

choked with a noisy and curious

crowd. Speed reached the fire lines and was nabbed by a burly cop.

"I'm Speed Gallagher," Speed panted. "You know; playin' at the Elite this week. Let me through, will you?"

The name was magic. "Sure! That's all right, Speed," the cop said. "Go ahead. I don't reckon you can do much, though. They think they got everybody out. She's burning like the very devil."

Speed rushed around to the back of the theatre and stopped. Flames were curling out of the door, coiling high about the brick wall. Speed backed across the street and stood before the lighted show window of a hardware store, cowering away from the heat.

There Red Martin found him. Red was screaming with excitement and pointing upward. Speed looked up. An icy agony of horror flooded through him.

High up on the otherwise black brick wall, just under the peak of the stage roof, there was a window, about a foot and a half square. Framed in the window was Louise Clare. Her face and head were clearly seen in the glare from the flames below.

"Do something!" Red Martin shouted frantically, beating his fists together. "Good God, Speed, what can we do? Nobody can get in there! That whole lower part's just a roaring hell. Man, we got to do something!"

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